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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7877

INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS PRIORITY

RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 7318

RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY 9848

RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 5714

RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL PRIORITY 5668

RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 1798

RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON PRIORITY 0044

RUEHCHI/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI PRIORITY 6855

RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

RUEKDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGKOK 002003

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/13/2019

TAGS: PGOV PHUM PREL TH BM

SUBJECT: THAILAND ISSUES ASEAN CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT IN
RESPONSE TO ASSK VERDICT

REF: BANGKOK 1939

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Classified By: DCM James F. Entwistle, reason 1.4 (b,d)

¶1. (C) Summary and comment. Thailand issued an ASEAN Chairman's statement on August 11 reiterating the call for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi (ASSK) as well as all other political prisoners, with the goal of allowing them to participate in the 2010 general elections and paving the way for national reconciliation. Thai Foreign Minister Kasit Piromya told Ambassador August 13 that he had sent a circular to his ASEAN colleagues requesting concurrence for an ASEAN appeal to the Burmese regime to grant amnesty to ASSK. Kasit had lamented to Ambassador August 6 about the potential damage that Burma could do both to itself and ASEAN with a conviction of ASSK. In the wake of an ASSK conviction, Kasit asserted that Thailand would ally itself with "old ASEAN" members to assert a more forceful line on Burma. Publicly, Kasit has talked about the political implications of the ASSK verdict and traveled to Malaysia August 13-14 intending to consult with the Malaysians, who called for concerted ASEAN action.

¶2. (C) Comment: Thailand has taken a leadership role as ASEAN Chair by releasing its second Chairman's Statement calling for the release of ASSK and all political prisoners. In the August 11 Chairman's Statement, Thailand has taken an even more forward leaning stance connecting the release of ASSK and all political prisoners to national reconciliation and democratization in Burma. Kasit seems willing to lead the charge to take a tougher stand on Burma as he engages members of "old ASEAN" in the coming days. End summary and comment.

ASEAN Chair Statement

¶3. (SBU) Thailand released an ASEAN Chairman's Statement August 11 in response to the verdict rendered by the special court in Rangoon convicting ASSK. The ASEAN Chairman's Statement expressed deep disappointment that ASSK was sentenced to a year and a half house confinement with limited freedom and reiterated the call for her immediate release, along with all others still under detention (see para 7 below for the full text).

Kasit starts diplomacy in "Old ASEAN"

¶ 4. (C) FM Kasit told Ambassador by phone from Malaysia August 13 that he had sent a circular to his ASEAN colleagues requesting concurrence for an ASEAN appeal to the Burmese regime to grant amnesty to ASSK. In an August 6 meeting with Ambassador (reftel), Kasit had said that he would utilize visits to Indonesia and Malaysia to consult about the way forward. He said Thailand would seek to ally with "old ASEAN" members to push a more forceful line. He and Singapore FM George Yeoh had repeatedly pushed their Burmese FM counterpart to convey the views of ASEAN, and the need for change, fully to Than Shwe. The recent visit of Singapore Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong to Burma to hammer home ASEAN concerns was also important; "there needs to be more of such regional pressure", Kasit said.

¶ 5. (C) In the August 6 meeting, Kasit had lamented the potential damage that Burma could do both to itself and ASEAN with a conviction of ASSK. Kasit asserted that, the Burmese knew well the damage they would do to themselves and to ASEAN with a conviction. ASEAN countries were consistently harping on the "centrality of ASEAN" in regional architecture but ASEAN must earn its role, in Kasit's view. Without fundamental change in Burma, ASEAN would have no credibility, and would not be able to advance further as a community, Kasit stated.

¶ 6. (SBU) In comments reported in the Bangkok Post August 12 before he departed to Malaysia to attend the 11th Meeting of the Malaysia-Thailand Joint Commission for Bilateral Cooperation, and the Second Ministerial Meeting on the Joint Development Strategy for Border Areas between Malaysia and

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Thailand, FM Kasit stated the Burmese government should think about the demands of the international community and the United Nations regarding general elections scheduled for next year. Kasit was quoted as saying "it (Burmese regime) should not just stop because of the verdict, which has a lot of political implications. It should be homework for the Burmese leaders to think about." (note: Kasit is one of the few Southeast Asian politicians who openly uses Burma rather than Myanmar, a semantic signal of his personal leanings in support of Burma's democracy movement.)

¶ 7. (U) BEGIN TEXT OF ASEAN CHAIR STATEMENT:

-Thailand, as the ASEAN Chair, has learned with deep disappointment that Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was sentenced to serve eighteen months of house confinement with limited freedom. This sentence was passed in spite of the calls which had been made by the ASEAN Foreign Ministers attending the 42nd ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting and the 16th ASEAN Regional Forum held in July 2009 in Phuket, for the immediate release of all those under detention, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, with a view to enabling them to participate in the 2010 General Elections thereby paving the way for meaningful dialogue and national reconciliation among the people of Myanmar.

-Thailand, as the ASEAN Chair, reiterates the above-mentioned calls for the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and all others still under detention to full freedom and to enable them to participate in the 2010 General Elections. Such actions will contribute to national reconciliation and facilitate the democratization of Myanmar. Free, fair and inclusive General Elections in 2010 will then pave the way for Myanmar's full integration into the international community.

-All ASEAN member countries wish to see Myanmar, a fellow ASEAN member, be at peace, prosperous and well respected in the international community. We stand ready to cooperate with the Myanmar Government in its efforts to realize the seven steps to democracy and remain constructively engaged

with Myanmar in order to build the ASEAN Community together. We also continue to support the ongoing offices of the United Nations Secretary-General and urge Myanmar's full cooperation with the United Nations.

END TEXT.
JOHN